



The Expert

This is a newsletter dedicated to helping individuals and agencies work within a world that the average person can easily view with anxiety, feelings of intimidation and confusion

News Letter

Witness

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Is This The Answer?

If you have looked at my resume, you know that I have served on the Kern County Citizen's Review Panel (CRP) for the past four years, the last two as co-chair. The experience was enlightening, to say the least. CRPs were mandated by the Federal Government. At least three counties in every state that received a certain level of Federal Child Welfare money were required to establish a CRP to examine the child welfare programs in those counties. Kern County's welfare director chose to request a CRP for our county. The grant was managed through the Kern County Network for Children. The Network recruited 19 citizens most of whom were recognized as advocates for children. The local CRP existed for four years, submitting an annual report. Following our 2005 report, our Welfare Director chose not to apply for another two years funding. During my tenure on the Kern CRP, the question frequently was raised in my mind as to the political will among our county supervisors to actually take action to correct serious flaws in our child welfare services. On occasions when a child was killed as a result of abuse and word got to the media, we would observe much chest pounding and hear protestations by the local politicians as to the importance of protecting children. Such catch phrases as, "children are the future of our country" were repeated over and over. At one board of supervisors meeting I suggested that I was very encouraged by all this talk of protection and commitment to children. I added that I was excited to see how this would translate into substantive action at the next budget hearings. The backpedaling was so severe that I feared they would trample each other. Once the light of the media was directed somewhere else and the chest bruises healed, priorities changed and children lost to other needs.

At the end, it did appear that the local DHS (after much defensiveness) did make some considerable changes associated with the CRP suggestions and recommendations. However, the real substantive issues of agency culture and lack of quality assurance have yet to be addressed. Moral of the line staff remains extremely low. This is reflected in the incredible staff turnover, which is costly and promotes inconsistent services.

At the root of most child welfare



Child Welfare Services

1. Federally supported foster care services were not begun until 1961.
2. In the 60's and 70's there was a great deal of research on child maltreatment.
3. Dr. C. Henry Camp's book, "The Battered Child" ignited the public awareness and horror towards child abuse and neglect.
4. The implementation of mandated reporter laws began in the mid 70's.
5. We have come a long way in a short time.
6. We have a long way to go!

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(Continued:) Is This The Answer?

Which Leads to What?

The debate gauntlet has been thrown down, and some people are thinking outside the box. One of the newer ideas being tossed around is something called Entrepreneurial Child Welfare Services. It is being promoted by a non-profit organization called Stewards of Change. This organization, has put together a national conference called: Entrepreneurial Solutions to Child Welfare Challenges. The ideas being put forth are very exciting.

The conference brochure sets forth what it calls: “the revolution of innovation”. The idea is to build financial markets for social entrepreneurship. The Stewardship for Change would offer grants that would offer investors a guaranteed rate of return on their investment during the startup phase of operations. An example of grant usage in child welfare services might be to ensure a return for a start-up company that would provide foster care recruitment services to agencies in a metropolitan market. As these services produced a profit due to efficiencies in operations, investors would see a return and profits could be reinvested in new direct service programs and additional stewardship grants.

Grant Model Example

Start with a foundation with \$50 million in annual grant giving. If the foundation chooses to give a maximum of 4% of their annual giving through a stewardship grant, their \$2 million could be used to fund a 10% return on capital from social venture funds. These funds would finance 100% of any given venture. If there are five different venture firms that wanted to fund five different projects, each approved by the foundation, the ventures would use the grants to fund a guaranteed return of 10% on the grant investments.

The process, as set forth in the brochure is far more complex than I have space for here. If you are intrigued about the details of this idea contact:

Stewards of Change, Inc.
155 East Main St.
Smithtown, NY 11787-2808



Important

If you would like more information, a training for your staff, or coaching for an upcoming law suit, you may contact me at the contacts below. If you are going to be testifying, talk to your attorney before you call me.

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